

Florence Township Council Regular Session 1/15/20

Florence, New Jersey
January 15, 2020

The Florence Township Council held a regular meeting on the above date in the Municipal Complex, 711 Broad Street, Florence, New Jersey.

Council President Sandusky asked that everyone remain standing after the Salute to the Flag for a moment of silence for Officer Tyrone Bond who had recently passed away.

The meeting was called to order by Council President Sandusky at 8:00 PM. Council President Sandusky led the Salute to the Flag. A moment of silence was held to honor Officer Bond.

The Opening Statement was read by the Clerk: This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice was posted on the municipal bulletin board on January 15, 2020; published in the Burlington County Times on January 14, 2020; placed on the Township website, and given to the Trenton Times for information on January 12, 2019.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Upon roll call the following were found to be present:

Present: Bruce Garganio, Paul Ostrander, Dave Woolston, Jerry Sandusky

Also Present: Mayor Craig H. Wilkie, Richard A. Brook, Township Administrator, Kelly Grant, Township Solicitor; Jenise Silinsky, Clerk

Absent: Frank Baldorossi, Nancy L. Erlston, Township Clerk

Mayor Wilkie gave an in-depth presentation about the PILOT Program, what it is, how the township benefits from it and the exact money amounts received from each business to date because of it. The presentation was recorded, and both the presentation and the video will be available on our website shortly.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Regular Session of December 4, 2019 and December 18, 2019

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Woolston to approve the minutes as submitted. Voice vote – all ayes.

FINANCIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Motion of Woolston seconded by Ostrander to receive and file the following reports. Voice vote – all ayes.

- Tax Collector's Monthly Tax Report and Water/Sewer Monthly report for December 2019
- Tax Collector's Collection Percentage Report as of 12/31/2019
- Court Administrator's Monthly Report for December 2019
- Township Clerk's Monthly Report for December 2019
- CFO's Budget Reports and Cash Reports for December 2019

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Motion of Ostrander seconded by Garganio to approve the **Treasurer's Bill List**.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky

NOES: None

ABSENT: Baldorossi

Unanimous vote – Motion carried

REGULAR CORRESPONDENCE

- A. Letter from Chris Doerner, 21st Century Antiques requesting permission to hold an Estate Auction at 625 East Third Street, Florence on Saturday, February 15, 2020 with a rain date of February 22, 2020. Preview of items starting at 9:30 a.m. with the auction commencing at 10:30 a.m.

Motion of Ostrander seconded by Woolston to approve the correspondence. Voice vote – all ayes.

APPLICATIONS

- A. Purse Bingo License, 50/50 Raffle License and Basket Raffle License for Riverbank Charter School 1300 Hornberger Avenue, Roebling, NJ on February 22, 2020 from 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.
- B. Social Affair Permit for Florence Township Education Foundation's Casino Night on February 8, 2020 from 5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. at the Florence Township Community Center, 69 Main Street, Roebling.

Motion by Woolston seconded by Garganio to approve the applications. Voice vote – all ayes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council President Sandusky opened the meeting to the public at this time.

Kathy Paul, 46 Delaware Avenue, asked what can be done about the traffic when Amazon employees are released from work. She said the cars back up on Railroad Avenue to the circle and they will not let you out. And on Florence-Columbus Road, the traffic is backed up to the Liquor Barn and no one will let you in there either. Delaware Avenue also gets backed up and she is asking for police presence to direct traffic. She also asked when the road will be repaired on the U-turn on Florence-Columbus Road.

The Mayor explained that for a number of years we have been working on road improvement master plans intensely with Burlington Township, Burlington County, the State of New Jersey, and for the past year and a half there has been a meeting with DOT as well. They had an initial plan for improvements at Florence-Columbus Road and Route 130, which was ultimately rejected. We are looking at some alternatives for those improvements that will help with the issue of traffic at Route 130 and Delaware Avenue/Florence-Columbus Road. Senator Singleton has taken the lead and has had meetings with the Commissioner of Transportation and those meetings have been progressing. We don't have a timeline because it is in the hands of the State. But the improvements are being worked on. For the past few years there are talks about improvements at various intersections, Weiss Development (across from Wawa) will be doing improvements on that side of 130 to take care of Cedar Lane. The county has committed to doing the improvements on the town side. Funding was received from Liberty, the Amazon property owners, for improvements to that intersection that may make it more conducive for the traffic to flow that way. He stated that two years ago the state said that they were going to pave Route 130 so he doesn't know if that includes the jughandle because that is a state highway.

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Mrs. Paul stated that trucks get lost on Delaware Avenue after missing the turn onto to Railroad Avenue. They sometimes sit for 20 minutes in the middle of the night with the engine running. She asked what she can do, she doesn't want to call the police every time.

The Mayor explained that he does not know if there is anything that she can do. It is a county road and he does not know how long they can sit there but he said that they can look into it and let her know. He told Mrs. Paul to dial 911 to have an officer respond in that case.

Don Kamienski, 10 McCay Drive, stated that many months ago Administrator Brook shared the plan for the intersection of Route 130 and Florence-Columbus Road and he had asked how long it was going to take. He said that Richard told him it would be four years. Now tonight he said that the Mayor has said otherwise and is wondering just how long it is going to take.

The Mayor stated that what was most likely shared was something the Township Engineer had completed for a modification. that Council had looked at and thought would work. The county agreed but when we sent it to the State of New Jersey they said that in 2041 it would fail. Another proposal was created and shared with Council but Council said no. Now we are back to the drawing board, although it is still a high priority and it could be done in four years. But first we have to agree on a design and then funding.

Keith Crowell, 74 Creekwood Drive, asked about the areas mentioned earlier in need of development. He asked the Mayor to describe those areas and the monies that have been used to develop that through the PILOT.

The Mayor said that the area is mostly along Route 130 and it extends onto Cedar Lane and Railroad Avenue. No monies have been put toward that other than when we had the planner design it. Richard stated that he can send Mr. Crowell a map that shows the exact areas of redevelopment in accordance with the State Statutes.

Mr. Crowell asked about the money used to demolish some properties. He asked Council to identify those areas and the plan for those vacant properties.

The Mayor said most of the properties are in downtown Florence adjacent to Maple Wood Homes. At different times the Housing Authority had been blamed for the properties and problems and it was not the residents at the Housing Authority but actually the people who were occupying the buildings. He explained that the plan is to maintain them as they are and when it is figured out as to what exactly is going to happen down there, we will go ahead. He said that Marconi Lodge was turned into a garden and if any residents have ideas then that would be great. He said it could be affordable housing eventually. But it will be to restore the neighborhood and make it better.

Mr. Crowell said that he would really like to see that happen. He has properties there and he said he is willing to partner with the township to help to develop that area.

The Mayor said they are always willing to partner for the better of the community.

It was the Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Woolston to close the public portion of the meeting. All ayes.

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RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-39
Renew 2019/2002 ABC License for NPH Florence LLC (Nook's)

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-40
Partial Refund Rental Inspection Fee

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-41
Refund Housing Inspection Fee

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-42
Refund Mechanical Inspection Fee

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-43
Release Maintenance Bond, NFI-QPSI

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-44
2020 Census Partnership

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-45
Support Burl. Twp's request to weight restrict a portion of Bustleton Road

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-46
Support Burl. Twp's request to weight restrict a portion of Neck Road

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-47
Risk Management Consultant Waiver

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-48
Current Estimate #1 & C.O. #1 Wastewater Treatment Plant Blower Piping

It was the Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Garganio to approve Resolution Nos. 2020-39 through 2020-48.

Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky

NOES: None

ABSENT: Baldorossi

Unanimous vote – Motion carried.

ORDINANCES

ORDINANCE NO. 2020-01
MODEL ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET
APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK
(1ST Reading) (Public Hearing & Adoption 2/5/2020)

It was the Motion of Garganio, seconded by Woolston to approve Ordinance No. 2020-01 and set the public hearing and adoption for February 5, 2020.

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Upon roll call, Council voted as follows:

YEAS: Garganio, Ostrander, Woolston, Sandusky

NOES: None

ABSENT: Baldorossi

Unanimous vote – Motion carried.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND OFFICERS

None.

REPORTS: ADMINISTRATION

Mayor

The Mayor mentioned that the free rabies clinic will be held Saturday, January 18, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. at the Public Works Garage.

There is no Council meeting until Wednesday, February 5, 2020.

Administrator

Administrator Brook explained that the County reached out about the annual mosquito spraying and they will be given authorization for 2020.

He mentioned that there will be a short, Closed Session at the conclusion of the meeting and Council will not be taking any formal action in Open Session.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Open Space Discussion

The Mayor presented a map and spoke about Open Space and some of the properties that have been acquired through the program. The voters approved a 1 cent tax in 2008 which is good for 20 years. We are 10 years into the program and those funds have been used to purchase some Open Space areas. The first property he pointed out was one of the first projects, the Rainier farm at the intersection of Cedar Lane and Bustleton Road. In 2012, a housing development was planned for the carnival grounds between the Riverbank Charter and Roebling Elementary schools. But Roebling Elementary was our only elementary school and if there was ever a need to expand, we would repay the open space account. This way the land would be available and if the need ever arises, otherwise there will always be open space there.

Next, he spoke about the Friday Property on Potts Mill Road (named after the Friday family who owned it). The township partnered with the scouts, both boys and girls, and are making improvements to the home using community development block money so that they have a meeting place. One of the Eagle Scout projects was to make a garden out there as well.

On Brown Boulevard we purchased 11 acres as open space. There were three lots that were owned by a developer who wanted to develop the lots and put in affordable housing. He sued the township as a builder's remedy, and in order to get him out of the picture, we used money out of our Open Space to

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purchase those 11 acres and used our own money for the other lots in order to get that builder out of there. The Mayor explained that the 1 cent tax has allowed us to preserve those properties as Open Space.

In the industrial areas, Whitesell doesn't have much left and Griffin Pipe has their improvements in place. We are picking up about 12 to 14 acres back near the Oak Mill development, which is not coming out of Open Space so no Open Space money will be used there.

The Mayor pointed out a few properties in the "country" that were purchased through the county and the state Open Space funds so there was no cost to the township. He also pointed out several other areas that the township or the county have identified as protentional "grow areas." If the owners were to ask, we would move forward to preserve those properties. There are other huge lots out by 295 that are not included because the homeowner has refused and does not want the designation. One property that has a designation is the Von Thaden farm at the intersection of Old York and Florence-Columbus Roads. If that were to be preserved then it would make a nice barrier, which ties into the Marter and the Rainier properties. There are 97 acres at the intersection of Cedar Lane and Bustleton Road (Carty property). Mr. Carty has been before the township a few times and wanted it to be zoned so he could put large homes there but because it has a high-water table the county will not designate it to be acquired. Most of that area does have a high-water table.

Another area is on Bustleton Road, which is owned by Burlington Coat Factory. They want to develop behind their facility and they have stated that if they were to be able to develop, they will preserve the other side but no agreement has been made. There is a 50-acre wooded area next to Fountain of Life but the county will not designate it because it is heavily wooded and it most likely has a lot of water there as well. There are some open spaces out there that may be beneficial if the township wanted to make some more money available through a dedicated tax, whether it is an additional penny or so to do so.

The current structure allows us only to use this on purchase and not improvements. If Council is inclined and wishes to move forward, they may want to allow us, with some caveats, because we don't want it to be just another tax that then can be used for whatever we want, to maybe do improvements or maintenance. With the county farmland program, the county agreed to give money back to the municipalities, but the economy had been bad. We have a lot of land that we own.

Administrator Brook stated that in order to expand on the referendum on the open space tax, some direction would be given to the Solicitor to prepare a referendum question. A decision would need to be made if you would want to keep it for acquisition only or utilize it for potential improvements to those properties. At the present time, the program runs for 20 years and it does have to be done by a referendum. The reason why the topic is coming up now is because Florence Township has projected out its debt service and we always want to make sure, if at all possible, that the amount you are collecting on that 1 penny a year is very close to what the debt service is. You could theoretically go out and keep purchasing properties but sooner or later you are going to be going into the current fund and hitting the other tax rate. Whereas here, you have a full balance and you are not incurring too much debt. The first question is, do you think it's viable and do you have an interest in going out to referendum this year to increase the open space tax whether it is from 1 penny to 2, and if you do, what would be the use? Is it acquisition or acquisition with potential improvements and maintenance?

Council President Sandusky said that he believes it to be viable, especially with the properties we already own. With the new penny it could be used to improve some of the properties we have.

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Administrator Brook said the good part of what has been done over the past ten years, is that properties were acquired and preserved as open space for the community. By acquiring these properties, they are being preserved in perpetuity for open space.

Councilman Garganio said that the maintenance part of it ends up being part of the standard township budget and he would not want to see it go to that. But he has no issue with improvements of and purchasing of the sites. He said that the 1 penny tax has paid off and it has done some wonderful things when you look at the map. He said if it is not done, at some point or another there will be development through all of those areas. He said it is a positive thing to save them now for future generations.

Councilman Ostrander said he likes the fact that the voters are being asked to approve it.

Administrator Brook said that the next step would be for the Township Solicitor to draft a referendum question, bring it back to Council and a determination will need to be made on the amount. At that point, if Council would like to move forward, the Solicitor would ultimately have to prepare an ordinance and then the Township Clerk will have to work with the county to ensure that it gets placed on the November ballot. The Township Solicitor will have a draft in February.

The Mayor asked to have the CFO provide a breakdown of the results of the increase. Administrator Brook said it is somewhere between \$125,000-130,000 depending on the value of the community. As the value rises, the amount collected will increase somewhat. But that is a good, fair range.

Councilman Garganio said that the nice part is that if you can get the local money, there are grant projects out there that want matching dollars and it allows the town to turn around and bring other dollars in. Even with the county program, one of the things that pushes you to the top of the chart is that the town is committing dollars to it as well.

Administrator Brook said that as a Governing Body, you can initiate, you do not have to wait if you see properties you think would be valuable to preserve them forever. You can move forward and you don't have to wait for another entity. It will be added to the February Workshop.

BOARD OF HEALTH

- Memo dated January 7, 2020

Administrator Brook explained that this is just an overview report. The Board of Health sends out a list of reports, we give a synopsis and a copy will be attached of those that warrant. It is just noted for the record that the Board of Health report was received.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Council President Sandusky opened the meeting to the public.

Keith Crowell, 74 Creekwood Drive, stated that he had heard a rumor that Richard is leaving. He thanked Richard for serving the community. He said he appreciates the relationship that he has had with Richard for the past twenty years. He said that Richard has always been honest, open and fair with him and he has worked with a number of Administrators in the state and by far, he thinks Richard is one of the top. He is sorry to see him leave and he wished him well.

Administrator Brook thanked Mr. Crowell and introduced his successor Stephen Fazekas, who is currently the Administrator in Burlington Township.

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The Mayor explained that in the past eight years that he has worked with Richard, all of the good things that have been going on have been because of him. He spoke about Stephen Fazekas who was in attendance, stating that in 1986 he was the youngest Fire Chief in the state of New Jersey. He served 25 years on the police force and the last 4 or 5 years as Police Chief. He and Richard have had a long working relationship and there will be a training period so we can continue to keep all things going forward. He thanked everyone and congratulated both Steven and Richard.

It was the Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Garganio to close the public comments. All ayes.

Motion of Ostrander, seconded by Garganio to adjourn to Closed Session at 9:04 p.m. where no action will be taken. Voice vote – all ayes.

ADJOURNMENT

Council returned to the Regular meeting at 9:26 p.m. No action was taken. Motion of Garganio, seconded by Ostrander to adjourn. Voice vote – all ayes. Meeting adjourned at 9:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy L. Erlston, RMC
Township Clerk
/jns